

England earn Women's Nations League win over Spain in World Cup final rematch

AFP – Jess Park fired England to a 1-0 win against Spain on Wednesday in a Women's Nations League clash that provided a measure of revenge for their World Cup final defeat.

Park netted in the 33rd minute at Wembley to ensure England saw off the side ranked second in the world.

After a 1-1 draw with Portugal in their tournament opener on Friday, Sarina Wiegman's side delivered a statement of intent ahead of their European Championship title defence in Switzerland this summer.

"I think we had a point to prove, we just wanted to do a lot better than Friday," she said.

"I think on Friday we spoke about the fact we have momentum, and then of course we drew. We wanted to prove to ourselves we can do better. And we absolutely knew that we had to step up."

It was the first time England had faced Spain since the Lionesses lost the 2023 World Cup final.

That showpiece success for Spain was eventually overshadowed by the controversy caused by the Luis Rubiales case.

Former Spanish football federation boss Rubiales was recently found guilty of sexual assault after kissing Spain star Jenni Hermoso on the lips without her consent during the World Cup medal ceremony.

Spain have tried to move on from the scandal, with their Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati saying she hoped speaking out about what happened can lead to change in football and wider society.

With the focus back on the pitch, England struggled in the early stages of their latest Spain showdown.

They were fortunate not to fall behind when Lucia Garcia's corner hit the crossbar.

Lauren James finally tested Spain keeper Cata Coll with a curling effort and then a fierce drive at the near post.

England were growing into the game and Park struck after some fine work by Alessia Russo, who carved through the Spanish defence for a shot that was blocked by Spain captain Irene Paredes.

The rebound fell for Manchester City midfielder Park, who prodded home from close range.

Spain looked to Salma Paralluelo for a near-instant reply, but the Barcelona winger's shot was wide before England keeper Hannah Hampton denied Bonmati.

The game was briefly paused in the 52nd minute when the stadium lights went dark.

But light was restored and Paralluelo looked in prime position to equalise after she was released by Athenea del Castillo, but she was closed down at the last moment by Millie Bright.

Montse Tome's team piled on the pressure, with Leila Ouahabi repelled by Hampton in a frantic finale.

England nearly had a late second after Coll spilled the ball from a sharp James effort before the keeper smothered it on the line.

"We had chances that we simply didn't take. That's a scenario that we need to improve on and we will improve," Tome said.

"England could have scored more as well. Cata Coll made at least three very good saves, it was a high-level match."

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